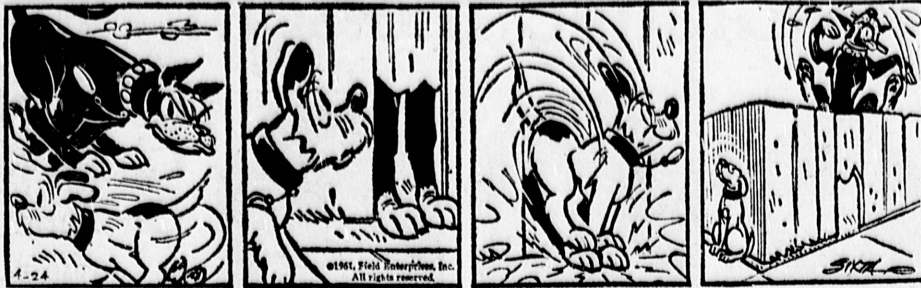


By George Sixta Railroads Issue Warning About Threats to California Products



Four major railroads serving California today issued a statewide warning that truck, teamster, and barge line efforts in the Congress to compel railroads to charge unnecessarily high rates may lead to exclusion of California products from eastern and midwestern markets.

The Santa Fe, Southern Pacific, Union Pacific, and Western Pacific jointly declared that two bills introduced in the U.S. Senate are intended to wipe out low rail rates merely to provide a "protective umbrella" for competing forms of transport.

Such legislation, the railroads contend, would arbitrarily add large amounts to transportation bills of shippers and receivers of freight in California and other states. It would lead, they say, to nationwide government price rigging in favor of less efficient transport.

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IT WOULD add even more to the cost of products shipped to California consumers — prices in many cases already "slightly higher west of the Rockies" because of distance.

The four rail carriers are asking shippers, State and local governmental bodies and the public to urge the Congress to kill the measures.

Low transcontinental rail rates have been vitally important to California's economic progress, the railroads assert.

"THANKS TO these low rail rates," they point out, "California perishable products, lumber and canned goods, for example, can be marketed in the East at prices competitive with perishables from Florida, lumber from Southern states and canned goods from areas closer at hand."

The railroads are directing their attack against Senate bills S. 1197 and S. 1089, which propose changes in the rate-making provisions of the Transportation Act of 1958.

"The bills would largely eliminate competition in the transportation field," the railroads declare, "and might well sound the death knell of such new service innovations as piggybacking." The measures, and there are now companion House bills, would artificially inflate living costs and nullify "major public gains" achieved in 1958 amendments to the Interstate Commerce Act, it is maintained.

"THE 1958 ACT, passed as the result of a groundswell of public pressure for regular reform in transportation, opened the way for the railroads to pass on to the public low rates reflecting their low costs and increasing efficiency," the four railroads say. "The proposed legislation would mean reversion to transportation price rigging by government dictum."

The railroads warn: "Without the right to compete, the future of rail transportation in the United States is grim. Ultimate effect of the bills might well be to drive the railroads entirely out of business as private enterprises."

THE RAILROADS maintain that 50,000 California railroad employees, with an annual payroll of over \$300 million, have a "vital personal stake in the defeat of this ill-advised legislation."

"So have the hundreds of communities which depend on the annual \$25 million tax payments of the California railroad industry for support of schools and other necessary community services, and on the industry's annual \$100 million purchases within the state," the rail carriers assert.

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